



The Communist Manifesto is constantly re-published

## Bourgeois, Proletarians and Communists

The [Communist Manifesto](#) is a classic by any standards. It is never out of print and is stocked in ordinary bookshops all over the world, selling steadily year after year.

The work was started in mid-1847 in England by Frederick Engels and Karl Marx when Marx was 29 and Engels was 27. The work was published in January or February of 1848, just in time for the outbreak of revolutions all over Europe.

All of the Communist Manifesto is memorable, but especially the first two parts (“[Bourgeois and Proletarians](#)”, and “[Proletarians and Communists](#)”), attached. The third

part is called “[Socialist and Communist Literature](#)” and the fourth part, of one page, is called “[Position of the Communists in Relation to the Various Existing Opposition Parties](#)”. A fifth part that was drafted, but not included, is the catechism- or FAQ-style document called “[The Principles of Communism](#)” drafted by Frederick Engels.

## **Bourgeois and Proletarians**

The new masters, the formerly slave-owning but now capitalist bourgeoisie, also known as burghers or burgesses, were a class that had grown up in the towns under the rule of rural-based feudalism. Marx and Engels were convinced that the bourgeoisie were themselves sooner or later going to be overthrown by the working proletariat. This was the class of free citizens (i.e. not slaves) owning nothing but their Labour-Power, that the bourgeoisie had brought into existence by employing them. The bourgeoisie were taking over from the feudal lords by revolution. They would themselves be toppled by revolution – proletarian revolution – said Marx and Engels.

Commissioned to write the Manifesto by the Communist League, Marx and Engels struggled to meet the agreed deadline, but came through with a magnificent text published just prior to the February, 1848 events in Paris. These events brought the proletariat as actors on to the stage of history to an extent that had never been seen before, thoroughly vindicating Engels and Marx.

Short as it is, the Manifesto is so rich and so compressed as to be saturated with meaning. It is practically impossible to

summarise. Here are some of the most extraordinary sentences of the first section of the Manifesto:

*The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles.*

*Society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other - bourgeoisie and proletariat.*

*The executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie.*

*All fixed, fast frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify.*

*All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses his real condition of life and his relations with his kind.*

*The need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the entire surface of the globe. It must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connections everywhere.*

### **Proletarians and Communists**

The second part of the Communist Manifesto contains statements about the Communist Party, about the family, about religion, and frank statements about the bourgeoisie.

The second part shows, among other things, the centrality of the relations of production that create and sustain the effect known as capital, which then in turn defines everything else in bourgeois society.

“Proletarians and Communists” also looks forward to the way that society can be changed, and thus serves to remind us that Marx’s work is always intentional, and is never merely empirical, descriptive or disinterested.

*“The average price of wage labour is the minimum wage, i.e., that quantum of the means of subsistence which is absolutely requisite to keep the labourer in bare existence as a labourer,”* wrote Marx and Engels.

*“But does wage labour create any property for the labourer? Not a bit. It creates capital, i.e., that kind of property which exploits wage labour, and which cannot increase except upon conditions of begetting a new supply of wage labour for fresh exploitation.”*

They finish the section with this unforgettable, classic vision:

***“...a vast association of the whole nation... in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all.”***

- The above is to introduce the original reading-texts: [Bourgeois and Proletarians](#), and [Proletarians and Communists](#), Communist Manifesto, Marx/Engels, 1848.
- To download any of the CU courses in PDF files [please click here](#).